

# The Classical Outlook

*Continuing Latin Notes*

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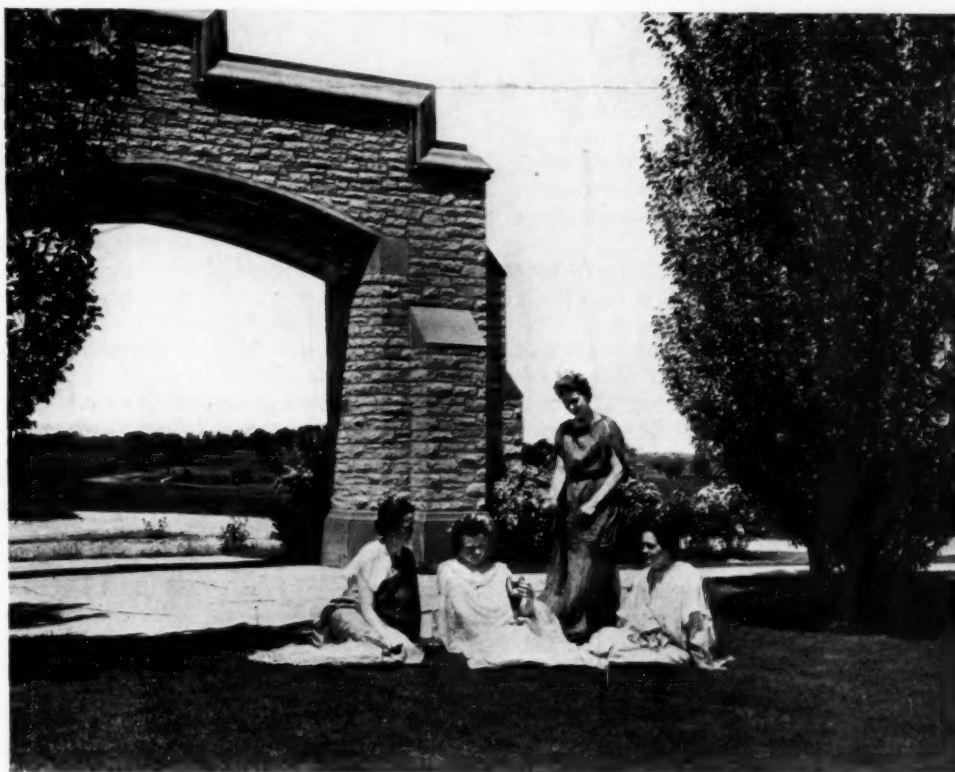
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STUDENTS OF MOUNT MARY COLLEGE,  
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

In an outdoor performance given by the Classical Club  
Sister Mary Dorothea, Latin Teacher

## O SOPHONISBA, SOPHONISBA O!

BY NORMAN W. DEWITT

*Victoria College, University of Toronto*

Extract from an address delivered before the Classical Sections  
of the New York State Teachers' Association  
at Buffalo and Rochester.

The principle stated by Horace in *Epistles* ii. 1,262-63, that the public will remember one bad line in a poem to the oblivion of all the rest, is illustrated by the story of the streamlined phrase printed above. Dr. Johnson relates in his *Lives of the Poets* how it ruined James Thomson's tragedy of

*Sophonisba*, because the wags fastened upon it and concocted the parody, "O Jemmy Thomson, Jemmy Thomson O!" On the present occasion it is used merely as a theme song to preface some remarks on the abuse of English "O" in translating Latin, a very short essay, as befits a very short word.

In spite of substantial improvement in English versions of Latin classics during recent years the excessive use of "O" with the vocative case and in exclamations still survives. Two early volumes of the *Loeb Classical Library* (*Loeb* in one syllable, not *low-ebb*) prefix an O to every proper name, although almost none occur in the Latin; the truth is that Roman proper names in the vocative regularly stand alone,

and *O Marce* would have sounded more strange in Latin than "O Marcus" in English. Still more objectionable than "O" with proper nouns is "O" with common nouns. Even the best of grammars offend in this regard: Hale and Buck have "O seat" and "O seats," though the *O* is in brackets, which reveals a misgiving. Bennett has "O gate" and "O gates," which is not justified even by biblical authority, though Psalm 24, 7, reads "Lift up your heads, O ye gates;" there is no *O* in the Vulgate. Elmer has "thou shore" and "ye shores," which at least has the merit of reminding us that English possesses other means of rendering the vocative. Most sensible of all is Lane, who says that Latin has five cases except in the Second Declension, and there he rightly renders *domine* by "master" simply; we don't say "O master" any more than we say "O teacher," "O policeman," or "O chairman."

It would be a mistake to assume, of course, that we have no true vocatives in English. The vocative of "cat" is "kitty;" we don't say "cat, cat, cat" but "kitty, kitty, kitty." Similarly we don't say "hen, hen, hen" but "chuck, chuck, chuck." We don't say "come cow, come cow" but "co bossy, co bossy," where "bossy" is a true vocative. As for "hog," not even the professional hog-callers employ it, but say "su-ee, su-ee, p-i-i-gee, p-i-i-gee," where "su-ee" is an old vocative of "swain," related to Latin *sus*, just as "bossy" possibly is to *bos*. Even "goose" has its vocative; else why do we say "Goosy, goosy, gander, where do you wander?" This reminds us that a former colleague, rightly or wrongly, used to claim that words like "Willy, Johnny, and Tommy" were originally vocatives.

Other unrecognized vocatives exist in English. A once common example was "Say, professor," which has been justly discouraged. If a vocative is a form of address, then "Dear Sir" is a vocative, where "dear" is formal and does not denote affection. Still more formal is "My dear Sir," where "my" has faded along with "dear." So, when one sings, "My country, 'tis of thee," this is a true vocative, as becomes clear by recognizing that its Latin equivalent is *O patria*, which occurs in *Aeneid* ii. 241, and elsewhere. In this connection it may be noted that *O* is more often prefixed to common nouns than to proper nouns in Latin. To return to English, when a kind-hearted lady says to the indigent stranger "my good man," this is a mere form of address, to be turned by *O bone*, which occurs in Horace, *Satires* ii. 3, 31. In *Aeneid* xii. 261, we find *O miseri*, "my poor misguided men," and in v. 623, *O miserae*, "my poor deluded women." The point here made is this, that English "my" is the proper equivalent of the pathetic *O* in Latin.

While Latin *O* is frequently pathetic, this is only one of its forces. It also expresses adoration, admiration, exasperation, expectation, imprecation, supplication, invitation, and other emotions not denoted by words ending in -ation, few of which are to be rendered by "O." In this regard the grammars are again at fault. For example, Allen and Greenough render *O me infelicem* by "Oh, unhappy I!" as if we ever said "O dear I" and not "O dear me." A better rendering would be, "What an unlucky person I am!" Similarly, *O me miserum* is not "Ah, wretched me," but "What an unfortunate creature I am!" For *O fortunata mors* Allen and Greenough have "Oh, happy death!" It were more idiomatic to say "What a blessed death" or "What a beautiful way to die!" The English equivalent of *O* in such phrases is regularly "what." If one were to render into Latin "What a piece of work is man," it might be *O miram rem, genus humanum!* This is the *O* of admiration.

There is also an *O* of desperation, as in that baffling phrase of the First Catilinarian, *O tempora, O mores!* Mr. Hale, who took infinite pains with his renderings, turns it "O the times! O the ways of men!" Usually he is more happy; in this instance the words sound like the reproach of an injured lady against the opposite sex. The key to the difficulty is to eliminate the "O." Mr. Greenwood of the *Loeb Library* in one

of the *Verrines* renders it, "What times we live in!" This is the correct approach, but it leaves one half of the phrase unexploded. The best recourse is to make a bold expansion, because no brief English phrase can pack such a static charge of feeling as collects in a few Latin syllables. Somewhat diffidently we suggest the following: "What is the world coming to? What has happened to our morals?"

In conclusion we suggest the following rules, though we have by no means exhausted the subject: Avoid "O" with the vocative sedulously, because it is never used with Roman proper names in Latin, and because it makes the English version ridiculous. With adjectives and with common nouns try rendering it with "my," as in *O bone*, "my good man," and *O patria*, "my country." In exclamations try rendering it with "what," as in *O rem ridiculam*, "what a topping joke."

## "CHASING PHANTOMS IN TEACHING LATIN"

BY ELLA LARNER

Augusta, Kansas

Nearly a score of years ago our predecessors brought forth into the field of Latin, a revision, as it were, of our objectives, conceived in all earnestness, and dedicated to the ideal that the classics still have a vital place in the curriculum.

Now we are engaged throughout our educational world in a great "curriculum" war—testing whether our subject, or any subject of its kind, can long endure. We have come to dedicate a portion of this program to those far-seeing men and women who devoted time and effort unstintingly that Latin might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we pay tribute to their efforts.

You who read this will little note, nor long remember, what is said here; but you cannot forget what they did for the cause. It is for us class room teachers and supervisors rather to dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work which these leaders so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to take up the torch and "carry on" with increased zeal the cause for which they labored so devotedly; to resolve that this work shall not have been done in vain, and that Latin shall have a new place of importance in the educational world of today, and whether it be taught primarily for Latin's sake, for its value to English, or for whatever reason, it shall not be dropped from the curriculum.

Some of you doubtless recall an article that appeared in the *CLASSICAL JOURNAL* of a few years ago (XI, 25) with the title "Chasing Phantoms in Latin Teaching," in which the author discussed two proposals for the betterment of conditions in the field of Latin, which, because of their unsubstantial character, according to the writer, he chose to call "phantoms."

In dealing with this subject today, it is not the purpose of the writer to suggest a magic formula that will serve as a panacea for all the ills of our subject, nor to offer apology for the sins of commission or omission that we as teachers of our subject may have "from time to time so grievously committed." It is rather, intended that we shall follow the suggestion that a frank investigation of oneself and one's activities, profession, or business, is a wholesome thing, and in that spirit of frankness and open-mindedness, ask ourselves these questions: "Are We Chasing Phantoms in our Teaching of Latin Today? What are we doing with the recommendations set forth by the Classical Investigation Report? Have the objectives thus recommended been sufficiently tried and tested to prove their merit? Are we securing real and vital returns for the efforts invested or are we reaching out for eery, ethereal, phantom-like objectives of a non-substantial existence that elude our grasp, mock us, whisper, and vanish into the darkness?"

Time forbids a discussion of the many types of objective—each of which has its place in the scheme of things; and we trust it is clearly understood that in the discussion of the one type that has been chosen, there is no thought of minimizing the importance of the others. This discussion will confine itself to the practical side of the question—in other words those objectives which might be classed as “application objectives,” in the phraseology of the late Mason D. Gray.

One may admit that we are living in a constantly changing world and that we are dealing with a somewhat different type of pupil; but even so, I cannot feel that Latin is entirely alien to the life of the average high school boy and girl today. Personally, I think the opportunities to convert potential values of Latin into real, vital forces in his high school life were never greater. On the other hand, I do not believe the average pupil will, as if by magic, unaided and undirected, seize upon those potential values. Therein lies our responsibility! Therein is our challenge!

I have great admiration and great sympathy for the youth of today who has the courage to study Latin in spite of the discouraging statement of the parent who “took four years of it and it didn’t do him any good,” in spite of the advice of an indifferent, if not actually opposed administrator, and in spite of the murmurs of disapproval on the part of his none too ambitious fellow classmates. I admire that youth and believe he is entitled to a means of access to every return the subject has to offer, whether it be strictly cultural, disciplinary, historical, or practical.

I may be admitting by the statement I am about to make that the pupils with whom I deal are not normal, average ones; but I confess to you that the average boy in his effort to piece together a sentence of four or five lines in length, whose subject is in line one and verb in line five is not going to be stirred to the depths by the thought that some day in the far distant future, when he becomes a doctor, or a lawyer, he will reap the reward for his effort—he will use his Latin. A few may be thus inspired, but for the most part, it is too visionary. The question in his mind is: “What use can I make of it now—in my other classes, in my daily life?”

Are we powerless to answer his question? Certainly not. The logical thing to do is to capitalize the natural interests of the pupil and to cultivate the habit of having him discover Latin (a use for it) in his environment and thereby change these far-off remote values into real ones.

Some one says, “How can we do this?” The writer’s answer would be that the instances for such application are innumerable, and that the big item is not so much the “how” but the “when,” for the time element is a factor of importance.

Briefly let us enumerate a few of the ways. First, there is the matter of coordination of Latin with the other subjects the pupil is taking. Nothing delights a pupil more than to come back to his language teacher and report that he knew a certain word or words in science, English, or algebra; and no Roman conqueror ever celebrated a greater triumph in his own soul than did the girl who made a better grade than usual in constitution class because she remembered some Latin phrases. Incidentally, may I add “All honor” to teachers of other subjects who aid our cause.

One of the most interesting parts of the Latin class period may be that in which time is taken (five minutes may be all that is needed) for individuals to report their “finds” for the day, some of which may be from newspapers, magazines, shows, programs, outside book reports, etc.

In the one class room with which I am best acquainted, one may see a display of almost everything from the ruins of the Colosseum and the Forum to the clipping of the comic strip “Gasoline Alley,” in which one proud father boasts that his son is going out for track and the other with equal pride remarks that his son is going out for “cum laude.”

Those may represent to you the two extremes or the “sub-

lime to the ridiculous;” but ranging all the way between those are copies of musical programs that have been given either in the school or the town in which some one has found some Latin, or copies of an American Legion magazine, containing poems with familiar Latin quotations for titles, not to mention illustrations from the rotogravure sections of newspapers, and a variety of posters and booklets that illustrate some original idea of the pupil in regard to word derivation or other phases.

To make Latin function thus in the daily life of the pupil is not an altogether easy task. I do not believe that there is an inherent, mysterious essence that will guarantee results in magical fashion; but I do contend that if we are alert to use the innumerable opportunities that are ours to change the phantom-like creature of future or potential values told about to the pupil into real, living, substantial ones that walk by his side in class room and daily life; if we by good, earnest teaching rather than argument prove the worth-whileness of our subject, we shall at least be cultivating a Latin atmosphere, and encouraging the pupil to think in terms of Latin. We will “in due season, if we faint not” prove that, “from the classics there will spring a fuller and richer life in the things that are, tho’ unseen,” and these values will not be as the Santa Claus symbol of Carl Sandburg—“the fabric of a dream, a phantom rider, a fantasy on a far toboggan, a silver wisp of an illusion making a track of light through a key hole.” Through an interest created in their study, there will pour forth as through an open door, the full, mellow light of centuries of a remarkable civilization. The youth will gain pleasure in the pursuit of his phantom, and, more than that, a glowing pride and self respect in having become its captor.

### HAVE YOU TRIED THIS?

“*The Greek Gods in Modern Dress.*” Miss Margaret Roy, of the Melvin (Ill.) High School, sends in the following directions for a mythology poster:

Find colored pictures from magazines to represent each of the principal Greek gods. Cut them out and arrange them on a piece of light cardboard, printing below each the name and function of the divinity which it suggests. A picture of a girl graduate in cap and gown with a diploma, or a picture of a schoolteacher, would represent Athene, goddess of wisdom. A woman preparing food would represent Hestia. A woman gardening would suggest Demeter; a messenger boy, Hermes; a fireman or a blacksmith, Hephaestus; an athlete, Apollo; a girl in hunting costume, Artemis. A king might represent Zeus as the supreme ruler, or an aviator would represent him as god of the sky. Gods and goddesses represented might include Zeus, Hera, Athene, Apollo, Artemis, Poseidon, Demeter, Hermes, Aphrodite, Ares, Hephaestus, Hestia, Hades.

### BOOK NOTES

Tacitus. Selections from his Works edited by Frank Burr Marsh and Harry J. Leon. 546 pp. New York. Prentice-Hall, \$2.25.

Selections from the Annals, Agricola, and Germania. Full notes and historical commentary.

A Reading Book to Accompany Smith’s First Year Latin. By Una Le Boutillier. 41 pages. The Shipley School, Bryn Mawr, Pa. Privately printed.

Sparkling, lively stories in “made Latin,” to be used at designated points in the classwork. Exceptionally well printed.

Blank Outline for Elementary Latin. By John C. Green, Jr. 92 pages. Published by the author, Box 315, Glen Head, L. I., N. Y., 50c.

Contains blanks to be filled in, under the headings, “Nouns,”

"Adjectives," "Verbs," "Pronouns," "Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions," and "Rules and Special Word Lists." To be used chiefly for drill on forms and vocabularies. Philological Studies in Honor of Walter Miller. Edited by Rodney Potter Robinson. University of Missouri Studies, Columbia, Mo. 189 pages. \$1.25. Contains nine scholarly studies by former students of Professor Miller, and a foreword by James R. Angell.

## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Classical Conference held at Atlantic City on Nov. 28, under the chairmanship of Miss Mildred Dean, was well attended. Dr. A. F. Sechatoff spoke on "Modern Tendencies in the Elementary Schools and Their Influence on the Latin Course." Dr. Richard Walker headed a panel discussion of "Questions Latin Teachers Should Ponder Today," with the topic, "What can a Latin class do towards helping children live together and work together?" Miss Julia M. Jones discussed "What are the fundamental activities by which children learn in a Latin class?"; and Miss Melba Wilson, "What is the function of the teacher in the learning process in a Latin class?" The panel was followed by two papers, one by Dr. Alice Braunlich on "Plato and Twentieth Century Thought," and one by Dr. James Stinchcomb on "The 1940 High School Graduate in College."

The Rhode Island Branch of the Classical Association of New England has sponsored a State Latin Club—the only organization of its kind in the country, so far as its sponsors are aware. Membership in the club is open to students in junior and senior high schools, and already more than two hundred boys and girls have become members. Two meetings have been held, to which delegates of the society are sent, and at which the program has consisted of business, addresses, and social activities.

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## PICTURES

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In "A Workbook for Latin Vocabulary," edited by Stephen A. Hurlbut, (The St. Albans Press, Washington, D. C.), all the required words of the C.E.E.B. 1st-2nd Year Vocabulary are so arranged and printed that their English meanings may be recorded as the words are met in reading Caesar. This "work-study" notebook brings the learning of the Latin words into a close and vital connection with the reading, securing thus active interest on the part of the student. It may be used with any of the standard Second Year textbooks, and it includes reviews & tests, phrases & idioms, and work in the derivation of words.

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## AUXILIUM LATINUM THE ORIGINAL POPULAR LATIN MAGAZINE

Dr. Albert E. Warsley, Editor  
P. O. Station "S" (Box 54), Brooklyn, New York

The attention of Latin teachers not yet familiar with our *Auxilium Latinum* (Magazine in Latin for Classroom Use) is called to consider using this popular, 16-page Latin Magazine as a supplementary sight-reading text in their classrooms. Beginning its ninth (9th) Volume of publication this year, it is more interesting than ever before and so edited that it can be easily read by all Latin students, including 2nd year Caesar classes. Edited by seventeen editors, including Dr. Lillian B. Lawler, editor of *The Classical Outlook*, and whom we offer as our reference, each issue is replete with interesting items, viz.: plays, playlets, short stories, serials, legends, essays, myths, extracts from ancient authors, current events, biographies of famous Americans, jokes, comic strips, historical anecdotes, etc., in beautiful Latin about which one teacher writes: "The simplicity of style and elegance of composition are outstanding." About its beautiful cover, featuring a famous Caproni cut different in each issue and each in a different colorful dress, Miss Frances Sabin has remarked: "I seldom see a cover to a publication as attractive as the one on *Auxilium Latinum*." About its usefulness, Miss Mildred Dean has stated: "We need *Auxilium Latinum*, for it covers a field not entered by *Classical Journal* or *Latin Notes* (now *Classical Outlook*)." Appearing bimonthly during academic years, from October to May, it is the official organ of A.P.S.L. (Association for Promotion of Study of Latin), membership in which is free with subscriptions, making student members eligible thus for our annual Latin Honor Medal Examinations competition and Latin Honor Society membership with handsome certificates. A page of student-written material is also presented with cash payments made for their published items. The varied staggered subscription rates for the year follow: 6 to 25 at 50c each; 26 to 75 at 45c each; 76 to 150 at 40c each. Sample copies at 20c each (refunded with later order). You may still secure all issues for this 1936-37 year by having your students subscribe to it now and mailing your order with remittance to address printed above.

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